8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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The girl's family know that she will be well provided for. They make sure of it when they 'walk the land'. They make sure their standing in the countryside will not suffer. Fortune and farm must be roughly equivalent. In the scale of rural prestige, each farm is valued against the fortune it can pay out with its daughters and the fortune it can bring in with its inheriting son's wife. In the words of the Inagh countryman quoted: "Backward places do not grow big fortunes". And as the farm is identified socially with the family whose members work it, these dowries measure the family's standing.

On the side of the family receiving the fortune, too, interests are served. The girl's dowry comes to them, to be used for their own purposes. With it, they are assured a competent 'new woman', as they call the new wife and daughter-in-law. She is trained to their position in life and to their own habits and sentiments. Girl and dowry are a fair exchange for prestige and alliance.

But these are not the only values at stake. The 'fortune' in the match is woven into the internal necessities of farm family life.

When agreement is finally reached between the negotiating parties, they go to a solicitor to make up the 'writings', as we saw in the quotation. By this, the countryman means they cast their agreement into legal form. For the 'writings' is a contractual instrument which unites marriage settlement and

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584 675 will. Reforms in land tenure have made it necessary recently to give an age-old custom proper legality, since the transfer of the farm is involved.

584 675 888 In the 'writings' the father of the groom makes over the farm and all its appurtenances to his son. In return, the girl's fortune goes to him. The father also makes provision for his own maintenance and that of his wife. It is his abdication, and like Charles V, he keeps only one monastery out of a vast empire for himself. He usually reserves the right to the 'grass of a cow', his keep, the use of the hearth, and the use of a room in the house. That room is the 'west room' already described, the best in the house. Thus, the cycle of life on the farm is completing itself. He and his wife step down from active command.

584 593 In payment for his abdication, he receives the fortune of the girl. A fair arrangement, we should say. But we should be wrong; it is much more. True to the obligations of his social role, he may not use it entirely for himself. The Irish small farmer does not retire, like the Iowan, to sunny California and the Townsend plan. He must meet the interests of the group. Ordinarily, the other children have been stalwart workers in the farm family corporation. They are not to be 'settled on the land'; some other provision must be made. They may come forward now for their long due reward and their corporate share.

Here the purposes behind the match show them-